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Fifty-sixth session
Item 13 of the provisional agenda

RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Abduction of children from northern Uganda

Report of the Secretary-General

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Introduction

1. At its fifty-fifth session, the Commission on Human Rights adopted resolution 1999/43, in which, inter alia, it condemned in the strongest terms all parties involved in the abduction, torture, killing, rape, enslavement and forcible recruitment of children in northern Uganda.

2. The Secretary-General brought resolution 1999/43 to the attention of the Governments of the Sudan and Uganda, by a note verbale dated 12 July 1999, soliciting their comments. Reminders were sent on 8 November 1999.

3. This report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 12 of that resolution.

I. INFORMATION PROVIDED BY THE GOVERNMENT OF SUDAN

4. The Government of the Sudan provided the following information on 18 November 1999.

"The problem of the female students from the Aboki school in Uganda

"The problem of the female students from the above-mentioned school, which arose in 1997 and has on several occasions formed the subject of discussions between Sudanese and Ugandan governmental delegations, consists in the fact that the Lord's Resistance Movement abducted a number of female students from a school run by an Italian church mission. At the time, the Sudanese Government held the following view:

"(i) The criminal acts committed by rebel movements in both countries are the responsibility of the movements themselves, since the Governments do not participate in those acts, are not consulted and are not present at the scene of the events.

"(ii) Both countries are suffering from such barbarous acts, the victims of which are innocent civilians. The Sudanese Government did not hold Uganda accountable, even though all the rural schools in southern Sudan had ceased operating due to the actions of the Garang movement which was receiving support and assistance from the Ugandan Government.

"(iii) This incident occurred in Uganda and the prime responsibility for that operation must be borne by the Ugandan Government and the Lord's Resistance Movement.

"(iv) In accordance with the principle of good-neighbourliness, and in order to prove its good intentions in regard to the establishment of friendly relations, the Sudanese Government will cooperate with the Ugandan side in order to help to solve this problem by urging the Ugandan rebels to return the children to their families, if they have families.

"(v) The Sudanese Government, acting in collaboration with UNICEF, returned a group of children who had fled from the Lord's Resistance Movement rebels to the town of Juba in 1997.

"(vi) In 1998, the Sudanese Government urged the Lord's Resistance Movement rebels to respond to the plea by the Ugandan Government, the school headmistress and the Italian mediator for the release of the students and agreed to this being arranged with the Ugandan side and the Saint Guido group so that they could be released inside Uganda.

"(vii) Before the end of 1998, the Lord's Resistance Movement rebels announced that Ugandan government forces had laid an ambush for its unit accompanying the children near the handover location, as a result of which the initiative was aborted and the Sudanese side was placed in an embarrassing position vis-à-vis the rebels.

"(viii) Since the ambush incident, the Sudanese Government has lost the confidence of the rebels in regard to the question of the female students and the rebels are now talking about leaving the students inside Ugandan territory.

"(ix) The Sudanese Government's position in regard to the manner in which such issues should be addressed is as follows:

"(a) The evil habit of abducting and using children for military purposes is unknown in the Sudan but is a well-known custom in Uganda where it was promoted by Museveni during his coup d'état. The leader of the Lord's Army is a Ugandan who upholds the same concept and John Garang, who is residing in Uganda, has also been afflicted with the same contagion.

"(b) The Sudan has consistently condemned the abduction and use of children for military purposes and has promulgated legislation prohibiting such acts. The Sudan has also announced its willingness to assist and cooperate to the fullest extent. However, the Sudan refuses to allow this issue to be exploited with a view to besmirching its reputation as is being done by Uganda.

"(c) Since both the Sudan and Uganda are suffering from the presence on their borders of common tribes whose customs, cultures and ethnic origins differ from those of the other ethnic groups in the two countries, a certain amount of friction inevitably arises and should be contained within the State concerned.

"(d) Endeavours must be made to ensure that the Governments of the two countries do not fall into the trap set by those groups.

"(e) To this end, there is a need to ensure respect for the values of good-neighbourliness, mutual recognition of the existing political entities in each country, non-interference in the internal affairs of both parties and respect for human rights.

"(f) Joint efforts should be made by both countries through political, economic and social cooperation.

"(g) The Government is willing to look into the outstanding problems between the two countries within this framework."

II. INFORMATION PROVIDED BY INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL SOURCES

5. Information about the situation of the abduction of children from northern Uganda was received from UNICEF and UNDP, and non-governmental organizations including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and the International Save the Children Alliance. A summary of this information follows.

6. Since 1986, in the northern Ugandan districts of Gulu and Kitgum, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), also known as the Lord's Resistance Movement, and other insurgent groups are said to have carried out systematic attacks on the civilian population, abducting thousands of children and forcibly recruiting them into their armed ranks.

7. Throughout 1997 and early 1998, the attacks allegedly intensified, killing hundreds of civilians and causing many more to flee their homes. Thousands of these internally displaced people were moved by the Government of Uganda to "protected villages" which were insufficiently resourced to provide even the minimum requirements for these people, such as shelter, nutrition, sanitation and clean water, and to ensure their safety and respect their human rights.

8. According to Amnesty International, food security in camps remains poor, and local people have consistently complained that the government forces, the Ugandan People's Defence Force (UPDF), has failed to protect them from assault by the LRA seeking to abduct children and loot food. There are allegations that the UPDF soldiers have themselves been directly responsible for human rights violations against people in camps.[1]

9. There have reportedly been incidents in which unarmed civilians caught in the countryside by UPDF soldiers have been extrajudicially executed, beaten, or raped.[2]

10. However, the International Save the Children Alliance reported that there has been a great reduction in the number of incidents involving the abduction of children in northern Uganda in 1999. In February, an armed group of approximately eight persons reportedly abducted a number of children from a village near Gulu, but since then, the LRA has not threatened the population. Some of the displaced persons have reportedly returned to their homes and have begun to cultivate their fields again. In most cases, children and the elderly have remained in the camps for security reasons.

11. The International Save the Children Alliance reported that children who have escaped or are rescued are taken to two rehabilitation centres in Gulu. According to statistics provided by these centres, up until the first quarter of 1999, a total of 5,837 children had been reintegrated since the beginning of the conflict into their communities after receiving medical treatment,

counselling and education. Estimates as to the number of missing children believed to be in the LRA base camp in southern Sudan vary between 2,000 and 5,000. Many of the children have reportedly been killed either by their abductors or as a result of the conflicts they have been forced to take part in. The sexual exploitation of many of the abducted girls has reportedly led to the birth of approximately 200 babies.

12. It is further alleged that, in contrast to the improved situation in the north of Uganda, armed clashes in the west of Uganda between the UPDF and the insurgent Allied Democratic Front (ADF), which have also involved the abduction and forcible recruitment of children, have intensified since June 1997.

Notes

[1] Amnesty International: "Breaking the circle: protecting human rights in the northern war zone", March 1999.

[2] Ibid.

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RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Status of the Convention on the Rights of the Child

Report of the Secretary-General

1. The General Assembly, in its resolution 44/25 of 20 November 1989, adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child and expressed the hope that it would come into force at an early date. The Convention was opened for signature in New York on 26 January 1990 and, in accordance with article 49 thereof, entered into force on 2 September 1990, on the thirtieth day after the date of the deposit with the Secretary-General of the United Nations of the twentieth instrument of ratification or accession.

2. On 28 April 1999, the Commission on Human Rights adopted resolution 1999/80 entitled "Rights of the Child", in which, inter alia, it reaffirmed its resolution 1998/76 of 22 April 1998 and General Assembly resolutions 53/128, 53/127, 53/117, 53/111, 53/116 and 53/122, of 9 December 1998, as well as all previous resolutions on this subject. The following issues were addressed in resolution 1999/80: implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (section I), protection and promotion of the rights of the girl child (section II), prevention and eradication of the sale of children and of their sexual exploitation and abuse, including child prostitution and child pornography (section III), protection of children affected by armed conflict (section IV), protection of refugee and internally displaced children (section V), progressive elimination of child labour (section VI), protection of children working and/or living on the street (section VII), promotion and protection of the rights of children alleged to have or recognized as having infringed the penal law (section VIII), promotion of the rights of children with disabilities (section IX), promotion of the child's right to health (section X), and promotion

of the right of the child to education (section XI). In section XII of the resolution, the Commission requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Commission at its fifty-sixth session a report on the status of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and on the problems addressed in resolution 1999/80.

3. At its fifty-fourth session, the General Assembly took note of the report of the Secretary-General on the status of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (A/54/265), which contained information on the status of the Convention and the problems addressed in Assembly resolution 53/128.

4. As at 5 December 1999 the Convention had received 140 signatures which were followed by ratification. In addition, 45 States had acceded to the Convention and 6 had succeeded to it, bringing the total of ratifications and accessions to the Convention to 191. A list of States that have ratified or acceded to the Convention, and the dates of their signature, ratification or accession, appears in the annex to the present report.

5. The Committee on the Rights of the Child held its twentieth session from 11 to 29 January 1999 at the United Nations Office at Geneva. At that session the Committee considered reports submitted by five States parties to the Convention. In addition, the Committee reviewed its cooperation with United Nations bodies in connection with the consideration of two draft optional protocols to the Convention. The Committee adopted a report on its twentieth session (CRC/C/84).

6. The Committee on the Rights of the Child held its twenty-first session from 17 May to 4 June 1999 at the United Nations Office at Geneva. During that session, the Committee considered reports submitted by six States parties to the Convention. The Committee adopted the report of the session (CRC/C/87).

7. The Committee on the Rights of the Child held its twenty-second session from 20 September to 8 October 1999 at the United Nations Office at Geneva. At that session, the Committee considered the reports submitted by six States parties to the Convention. The Committee also organized during that session, together with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, a two-day special meeting entitled "The Convention on the Rights of the Child: a decade of achievements and challenges", to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention by the General Assembly.

8. The twenty-third session of the Committee on the Rights of the Child will be held from 10 to 28 January 2000 at the United Nations Office at Geneva.

Annex

STATES WHICH HAVE RATIFIED OR ACCEDED TO THE CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD AS AT 30 NOVEMBER 1999 (191)

States	Date of signature	Date of receipt of instrument of ratification/ accession a/	Date of entry into force
Afghanistan	27 September 1990	28 March 1994	27 April 1994
Albania	26 January 1990	27 February 1992	28 March 1992
Algeria	26 January 1990	16 April 1993	16 May 1993
Andorra	2 October 1995	2 January 1996	1 February 1996
Angola	14 February 1990	5 December 1990	4 January 1991
Antigua and Barbuda	12 March 1991	5 October 1993	4 November 1993
Argentina	29 June 1990	4 December 1990	3 January 1991
Armenia		23 June 1993 a/	22 July 1993
Australia	22 August 1990	17 December 1990	16 January 1991
Austria	26 January 1990	6 August 1992	5 September 1992
Azerbaijan		13 August 1992 a/	12 September 1992
Bahamas	30 October 1990	20 February 1991	22 March 1991
Bahrain		13 February 1992 a/	14 March 1992
Bangladesh	26 January 1990	3 August 1990	2 September 1990
Barbados	19 April 1990	9 October 1990	8 November 1990
Belarus	26 January 1990	1 October 1990	31 October 1990
Belgium	26 January 1990	16 December 1991	15 January 1992
Belize	2 March 1990	2 May 1990	2 September 1990
Benin	25 April 1990	3 August 1990	2 September 1990
Bhutan	4 June 1990	1 August 1990	2 September 1990
Bolivia	8 March 1990	26 June 1990	2 September 1990
Bosnia and Herzegovina b/			6 March 1992
Botswana		14 March 1995 a/	13 April 1995
Brazil	26 January 1990	24 September 1990	24 October 1990
Brunei Darussalam		27 December 1995 a/	26 January 1996
Bulgaria	31 May 1990	3 June 1991	3 July 1991
Burkina Faso	26 January 1990	31 August 1990	30 September 1990
Burundi	8 May 1990	19 October 1990	18 November 1990
Cambodia	22 September 1992	15 October 1992	14 November 1992
Cameroon	25 September 1990	11 January 1993	10 February 1993
Canada	28 May 1990	13 December 1991	12 January 1992
Cape Verde		4 June 1992 a/	4 July 1992
Central African Republic	30 July 1990	23 April 1992	23 May 1992
Chad	30 September 1990	2 October 1990	1 November 1990
Chile	26 January 1990	13 August 1990	12 September 1990

States	Date of signature	Date of receipt of instrument of ratification/ accession a/	Date of entry into force
China	29 August 1990	2 March 1992	1 April 1992
Colombia	26 January 1990	28 January 1991	27 February 1991
Comoros	30 September 1990	22 June 1993	21 July 1993
Congo		14 October 1993 a/	13 November 1993
Cook Islands		6 June 1997 a/	6 July 1997
Costa Rica	26 January 1990	21 August 1990	20 September 1990
Côte d'Ivoire	26 January 1990	4 February 1991	6 March 1991
Croatia b/			8 October 1991
Cuba	26 January 1990	21 August 1991	20 September 1991
Cyprus	5 October 1990	7 February 1991	9 March 1991
Czech Republic b/			1 January 1993
Democratic People's Republic of Korea	23 August 1990	21 September 1990	21 October 1990
Democratic Republic of the Congo	20 March 1990	27 September 1990	27 October 1990
Denmark	26 January 1990	19 July 1991	18 August 1991
Djibouti	30 September 1990	6 December 1990	5 January 1991
Dominica	26 January 1990	13 March 1991	12 April 1991
Dominican Republic	8 August 1990	11 June 1991	11 July 1991
Ecuador	26 January 1990	23 March 1990	2 September 1990
Egypt	5 February 1990	6 July 1990	2 September 1990
El Salvador	26 January 1990	10 July 1990	2 September 1990
Equatorial Guinea		15 June 1992 a/	15 July 1992
Eritrea	20 December 1993	3 August 1994	2 September 1994
Estonia		21 October 1991 a/	20 November 1991
Ethiopia		14 May 1991 a/	13 June 1991
Fiji	2 July 1993	13 August 1993	12 September 1993
Finland	26 January 1990	20 June 1991	20 July 1991
France	26 January 1990	7 August 1990	6 September 1990
Gabon	26 January 1990	9 February 1994	11 March 1994
Gambia	5 February 1990	8 August 1990	7 September 1990
Germany	26 January 1990	6 March 1992	5 April 1992
Georgia		2 June 1994 a/	2 July 1994
Ghana	29 January 1990	5 February 1990	2 September 1990
Greece	26 January 1990	11 May 1993	10 June 1993
Grenada	21 February 1990	5 November 1990	5 December 1990
Guatemala	26 January 1990	6 June 1990	2 September 1990
Guinea		13 July 1990 a/	2 September 1990
Guinea-Bissau	26 January 1990	20 August 1990	19 September 1990
Guyana	30 September 1990	14 January 1991	13 February 1991
Haiti	20 January 1990	8 June 1995	8 July 1995
Holy See	20 April 1990	20 April 1990	2 September 1990

States	Date of signature	Date of receipt of instrument of ratification/ accession a/	Date of entry into force
Honduras	31 May 1990	10 August 1990	9 September 1990
Hungary	14 March 1990	7 October 1991	6 November 1991
Iceland	26 January 1990	28 October 1992	27 November 1992
India		11 December 1992 a/	11 January 1993
Indonesia	26 January 1990	5 September 1990	5 October 1990
Iran (Islamic Rep.of)	5 September 1991	13 July 1994	12 August 1994
Iraq		15 June 1994 a/	15 July 1994
Ireland	30 September 1990	28 September 1992	28 October 1992
Israel	3 July 1990	3 October 1991	2 November 1991
Italy	26 January 1990	5 September 1991	5 October 1991
Jamaica	26 January 1990	14 May 1991	13 June 1991
Japan	21 September 1990	22 April 1994	22 May 1994
Jordan	29 August 1990	24 May 1991	23 June 1991
Kazakhstan	16 February 1994	12 August 1994	11 September 1994
Kenya	26 January 1990	30 July 1990	2 September 1990
Kiribati		11 December 1995 a/	10 January 1996
Kuwait	7 June 1990	21 October 1991	20 November 1991
Kyrgyzstan		7 October 1994 a/	6 November 1994
Lao People's Democratic Republic		8 May 1991 a/	7 June 1991
Latvia		14 April 1992 a/	14 May 1992
Lebanon	26 January 1990	14 May 1991	13 June 1991
Lesotho	21 August 1990	10 March 1992	9 April 1992
Liberia	26 April 1990	4 June 1993	4 July 1993
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya		15 April 1993 a/	15 May 1993
Liechtenstein	30 September 1990	22 September 1995	21 January 1996
Lithuania		31 January 1992 a/	1 March 1992
Luxembourg	21 March 1990	7 March 1994	6 April 1994
Madagascar	19 April 1990	19 March 1991	18 April 1991
Malawi		2 January 1991 a/	1 February 1991
Malaysia		17 February 1995 a/	19 March 1995
Maldives	21 August 1990	11 February 1991	13 March 1991
Mali	26 January 1990	20 September 1990	20 October 1990
Malta	26 January 1990	30 September 1990	30 October 1990
Marshall Islands	14 April 1993	4 October 1993	3 November 1993
Mauritania	26 January 1990	16 May 1991	15 June 1991
Mauritius		26 July 1990 a/	2 September 1990
Mexico	26 January 1990	21 September 1990	21 October 1990
Micronesia (Fed. States of)		5 May 1993 a/	4 June 1993
Monaco		21 June 1993 a/	21 July 1993
Mongolia	26 January 1990	5 July 1990	2 September 1990

States	Date of signature	Date of receipt of instrument of ratification/ accession a/	Date of entry into force
Morocco	26 January 1990	21 June 1993	21 July 1993
Mozambique	30 September 1990	26 April 1994	26 May 1994
Myanmar		15 July 1991 a/	14 August 1991
Namibia	26 September 1990	30 September 1990	30 October 1990
Nauru		27 July 1994 a/	26 August 1994
Nepal	26 January 1990	14 September 1990	14 October 1990
Netherlands	26 January 1990	6 February 1995	7 March 1995
New Zealand	1 October 1990	6 April 1993	6 May 1993
Nicaragua	6 February 1990	5 October 1990	4 November 1990
Niger	26 January 1990	30 September 1990	30 October 1990
Nigeria	26 January 1990	19 April 1991	19 May 1991
Niue		20 December 1995 a/	14 January 1996
Norway	26 January 1990	8 January 1991	7 February 1991
Oman		9 December 1996 a/	8 January 1997
Pakistan	20 September 1990	12 November 1990	12 December 1990
Palau		4 August 1995 a/	3 September 1995
Panama	26 January 1990	12 December 1990	11 January 1991
Papua New Guinea	30 September 1990	1 March 1993	31 March 1993
Paraguay	4 April 1990	25 September 1990	25 October 1990
Peru	26 January 1990	4 September 1990	4 October 1990
Philippines	26 January 1990	21 August 1990	20 September 1990
Poland	26 January 1990	7 June 1991	7 July 1991
Portugal	26 January 1990	21 September 1990	21 October 1990
Qatar	8 December 1992	3 April 1995	3 May 1995
Republic of Korea	25 September 1990	20 November 1991	20 December 1991
Republic of Moldova		26 January 1993 a/	25 February 1993
Romania	26 January 1990	28 September 1990	28 October 1990
Russian Federation	26 January 1990	16 August 1990	15 September 1990
Rwanda	26 January 1990	24 January 1991	23 February 1991
Saint Kitts and Nevis	26 January 1990	24 July 1990	2 September 1990
Saint Lucia		16 June 1993 a/	16 July 1993
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	20 September 1993	26 October 1993	25 November 1993
Samoa	30 September 1990	29 November 1994	29 December 1994
Saudi Arabia		26 January 1996 a/	25 February 1996
San Marino		25 November 1991 a/	25 December 1991
Sao Tome and Principe		14 May 1991 a/	13 June 1991
Senegal	26 January 1990	31 July 1990	2 September 1990
Seychelles		7 September 1990 a/	7 October 1990
Sierra Leone	13 February 1990	18 June 1990	2 September 1990
Singapore		5 October 1995 a/	4 November 1995

States	Date of signature	Date of receipt of instrument of ratification/ accession a/	Date of entry into force
Slovakia b/			1 January 1993
Slovenia b/			25 June 1991
Solomon Islands		10 April 1995 a/	10 May 1995
South Africa	29 January 1993	16 June 1995	16 July 1995
Spain	26 January 1990	6 December 1990	5 January 1991
Sri Lanka	26 January 1990	12 July 1991	11 August 1991
Sudan	24 July 1990	3 August 1990	2 September 1990
Surinam	26 January 1990	1 March 1993	31 March 1993
Swaziland	22 August 1990	7 September 1995	6 October 1995
Sweden	26 January 1990	29 June 1990	2 September 1990
Switzerland	1 May 1991	24 February 1997	26 March 1997
Syrian Arab Republic	18 September 1990	15 July 1993	14 August 1993
Tajikistan		26 October 1993 a/	25 November 1993
Thailand		27 March 1992 a/	26 April 1992
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia b/		17 September 1991	
Togo	26 January 1990	1 August 1990	2 September 1990
Tonga		6 November 1995 a/	6 December 1995
Trinidad and Tobago	30 September 1990	5 December 1991	4 January 1992
Tunisia	26 February 1990	30 January 1992	29 February 1992
Turkey	14 September 1990	4 April 1995	4 May 1995
Turkmenistan		20 September 1993 a/	19 October 1993
Tuvalu		22 September 1995 a/	22 October 1995
Uganda	17 August 1990	17 August 1990	16 October 1990
Ukraine	21 February 1991	28 August 1991	17 September 1991
United Arab Emirates		3 January 1997 a/	2 February 1997
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	19 April 1990	16 December 1991	15 January 1992
United Republic of Tanzania	1 June 1990	10 June 1991	10 July 1991
Uruguay	26 January 1990	20 November 1990	20 December 1990
Uzbekistan		29 June 1994 a/	29 July 1994
Vanuatu	30 September 1990	7 July 1993	6 August 1993

States	Date of signature	Date of receipt of instrument of ratification/ accession a/	Date of entry into force
Venezuela	26 January 1990	13 September 1990	13 October 1990
Viet Nam	26 January 1990	28 February 1990	2 September 1990
Yemen	13 February 1990	1 May 1991	31 May 1991
Yugoslavia	26 January 1990	3 January 1991	2 February 1991
Zambia	30 September 1990	5 December 1991	5 January 1992
Zimbabwe	8 March 1990	11 September 1990	11 October 1990

Notes

a/ Accession.

b/ Succession.